



**CONGRESSMAN CURT WELDON**

***7th District Pennsylvania***



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STATEMENT OF HONORABLE CURT WELDON**

**CHAIRMAN, MILITARY RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE**

**JOINT SESSION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION,  
WILDLIFE, AND OCEANS AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY RESEARCH  
& DEVELOPMENT**

**“HEARING ON THE NATIONAL OCEAN RESEARCH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL  
REPORT ‘AN INTEGRATED OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEM’”**

On August 19, 1998, you and I sent a letter to the Secretary of the Navy and to the Director of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the Chair and Co-Chair of the National Ocean Research Leadership Council, which requested that the Council propose a plan to achieve a truly integrated ocean observing system. Today, our two subcommittees will receive testimony on that plan and proposals for its implementation.

The report of the Council’s plan, which was developed by the Ocean Observations Task Team, convened under the National Oceans Partnership Program’s Ocean Research Advisory Panel and chaired by Harvard University’s Dr. Robert Frosch, concludes that there are no technical or legislative impediments to implementing a National Ocean Observing System and that existing programs and a policy framework are already in place to get started. According to the report, appropriate modifications to policy, relatively modest increases in funding, and implementation of a management structure are essential, but the nation’s oceanographic community is prepared to move forward. The report asserts that development and integration of an integrated ocean observing system will not be easy, but by building on the current infrastructure, demonstrating a national commitment, and making a realistic investment, an integrated National Ocean Observing System (which does not exist today) can become a reality within ten years, and result in significant economic and environmental benefits to the United States.

The Frosch report includes an action plan with recommendations in five areas: management and organization, funding, investment strategy, policy, and “next steps.” I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses today on the case for establishing an integrated ocean observing system and the steps that need to be taken to get us there. There are several questions that I hope our witnesses will address during their testimony and in the question and answer session:

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- What is the case of establishing a national integrated ocean observation system, and why should such a system be established now?
- What are the barriers to establishing an integrated ocean observing system and what do we need to do to overcome them?
- What are the “next steps,” indeed, the “first steps” that need to be taken?
- Should we build on existing structures and relationships, or do we start afresh?
- What must be done to encourage investing funds and increased support in such a system by participating federal agencies, by state and local agencies, and by the private sector? What is the appropriate role of each in the endeavor?
- What is the strategy – What do we need to do – to provide the multi-disciplinary, long-term data needed to address basic research and applications in ocean sciences, to integrate existing and new ocean observing systems into a coherent, single system to address national need, and to establish a national comprehensive, long-term commitment to ocean observation?

Mr. Chairman, I share the Frosch report’s view that development and integration of an integrated ocean observing system will not be easy. Such a system will, however, be worth the challenge, the effort, and the investment that will be required. For, I believe, it can result in untold benefits to our country and its citizens, to our economy, and to our national defense.

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